



The Circuit Rider

Princeton First United Methodist Church
316 S. Church Street ♦ Princeton, IL 61356
princetonfirstumc.org

Pastor Michael Ray Hickok

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♦ DECEMBER 2025 ♦

A Word from Pastor Mike



We are journeying together as a church family through the season of Advent. The name comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” The season proclaims the coming of Jesus Christ—whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate. Each Sunday during worship, we light a candle in our Advent Wreath to help us in our celebration and to anticipate the lighting of the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve.

We are offering you several avenues to deepen your experience this year. In Sunday worship the themes include: Welcome into our hearts on November 30; Welcome into our church on December 7; and Welcome into our homes on December 14. Our Advent Study for 2025 will meet in Cushing Hall on Wednesdays at 5:30 on December 3, 10, and 17. This sixty-minute study is open to adults of all ages and will include discussion, conversation and fellowship.

Music is such an important component of our Advent and Christmas celebrations. We look forward to singing beautiful carols on Sundays as Charlie Gebeck accompanies us on the magnificent Pipe Organ in the Sanctuary. We are inviting the community to join us for a Christmas Carol Sing Along in our Sanctuary on Sunday, November 30 at 2:00 pm, entitled; The Joy of Christmas. Our Chancel Choir will offer a Cantata: Light of Christ, Born For Us on Sunday, December 21 at 9:00 am. This year we will worship on Christmas Eve at 4:30 pm and 7:00pm. Both experiences will include Lessons and Carols and Candle Lighting.

We look forward with eager anticipation to this joyous Advent and Christmas journey.

*May God in Christ bless you richly,
Pastor Michael Ray Hickok*

December Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve Service
December 24 4:30, 7:00

Saturday Evening Service

December 6th 5:30*
December 20th 5:30

Holy Communion

December 6th 5:30*
December 7th 9:00

Sunday Worship

Sundays 9:00

From the Office

Please coordinate with the office on any events or repairs going on at the church, so we don't have two things happening in one room. Thank you!

December at a Glance

December 3 - 11:30 UWF Christmas Luncheon
5:30 Advent Study
December 7 - 6:00 Youth Group Meets
December 9 - 1:30 Care Team
7:00 Church Council
December 10 - 12:00 YAH Christmas Potluck
5:30 Advent Study
December 17 - 5:30 Advent Study
December 18 - 11:30 Red Cross Blood Drive
December 24- 4:30 Christmas Eve Worship
7:00 Christmas Eve Worship

Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion will be served on the first weekend of December- **Saturday the 6th and Sunday the 7th** . If you prefer to take communion at home with the live broadcast, you are welcome to pick up a communion pack from the office during the week before.



Our Table

Our Table will meet twice in December to provide a meal and fellowship to anyone who would like to attend. Everyone is invited to come on Mondays, **December 8 and 15 from 5:00 – 6:00 pm.**



December Change the World

Change the World for December will be donated to **VIP (Very Important Person) Youth Group**. This faith based youth group is for special needs youth ages 13-22. They meet the third Sunday from 4:30 – 6:30 pm. The evening consists of a period for socialization, a simple meal, a music video with movements to dance to, a short Bible lesson read to them from that week's Bible verse, a craft that goes along with the Bible verse, and end the evening with physical activity. Thanks for donating your change into the jar outside the Sanctuary, as we "change the world" with each and every coin

Christmas Eve Worship



There will be two worship times on **Wednesday, December 24, first will be at 4:30. The second will be at 7:00 pm** . Both services will feature carols, Scriptures, and the singing of 'Silent Night' by candlelight. Be sure to invite your friends, family and neighbors to join us at any or all of these special services honoring our newborn Savior!

Change the World November Report

In November, we collected presents and raised **\$3,180.47** for Christmas for Kids **\$6,360.94** with the match from Missions. Your donations helped fulfill kids' wishes to give them a nicer Christmas and are greatly appreciated.

A Few Notes To Remember

- **Office Hours for Christmas:** the Church Office will be closed on Dec 25 and 26 for Christmas. The Office will also be closed January 1 for New Year's Day.
- **Calendars:** 2026 Calendars are here. They are on the table outside the office. A big thank you to Fiocchi-Jensen Funeral Home for giving us the calendars every year.
- **Parking Request:** We have a number of people in our congregation who have difficulty walking. It is important for them to find a parking space near the ramp or the Cushing Hall entrance. **We encourage those of you with no limitations on your mobility to park on the north and west sides of the building.** This will free up spaces on the east side for those who need to park closer. Thank you in advance for your kindness.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday School was so much fun this month! Our faith focus was "God Shows us the Way" and we read about Samuel appointing Saul as the first king of Israel, Solomon asking God for wisdom, and the servant girl helping Naaman. The children created crowns, sand art, and talked about what it means to be wise. Lots of discussions were had throughout the month about what we are thankful for and how to show God that we appreciate all that he does for each of us.



There will be NO Children's Sunday School on December 28th and January 4th. Children 7 and under can visit the nursery during the church service. Children 8 and older are welcome to attend the church service with his or her family.

Amanda Noord- Children's Sunday School Leader

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Youth Sunday School is for children grades 6-12 and meets in the Conference Room at 10:00 following Sunday Worship.

YOUTH GROUP

Youth Group is for anyone interested in grades 6-12 and will be held at church on the 12/7 from 6-7pm.



CHILDREN & YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

All children and youth are invited to a Christmas party on **December 21st** from **4:30-6:00pm** in Cushing Hall! There will be pizza, crafts, games, and lots of fun to bring in the holiday season! Please RSVP to Amanda Noord or Shelley Orwig by December 14th.



YOUNG AT HEART

We enjoyed pie and coffee with Pastor Mike and Linda at our November meeting. They presented a great program and slideshow on Legacy. We had very interesting “table talk” after their presentation.



On **Wednesday, December 10th**, we will have a Christmas potluck at **12:00** noon in Cushing Hall. We will be entertained by Pastor Ron Eckberg, who is a wonderful storyteller and musician. Please bring a dish to pass. The meat, drinks and table service will be provided. Everyone is invited. Signup sheet is on the table outside the church office. Come and enjoy the fellowship!

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



United
Women
in Faith

Sixteen women met in Cushing Hall on Wednesday, November 19th to express and to share their thanks to God. Judy Harris led an inspirational talk on “Thankfulness” and asked every woman to state one thing for which they are especially thankful. Val Horras then led a meditation on “Giving Thanks”. A thank offering collection was then made. **The women contributed \$129.91 in total.** It was decided that \$60 of the collection would be sent to Prairie South District for their missions and the balance of \$69.91 would be given to the Bureau County Food Pantry. Thanks be to God for all of our blessings!

Our annual **Christmas luncheon** will be held on **Wednesday, December 3 at 11:30** am at Ye Olde Underground Inn on 219 S. 6th Street in Princeton. Please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the table in front of the church office, if you plan to attend and to reserve your spot at the table. Everyone attending should bring a wrapped gift costing no more than \$10 for the grab bag.



ADVENT STUDY



Our Advent Study for 2025 will meet in Cushing Hall on **Wednesdays 5:30-6:30** on **December 3, 10, and 17**. The title of our Advent Study is *Everyday Advent*. We will use videos by Brenda Drost. There is no need to purchase a book or other resources. This sixty-minute study is open to adults of all ages and will include discussion, conversation and fellowship.



BOOK GROUP

Please consider attending our next discussion on **December 9 at 10 am** in the church library. Here is the current schedule for the rest of 2025.

December 9 *How Far to Bethlehem* by Norah Lofts

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The **Righteous Renegades** Sunday School welcome anyone who would like to **join in Cushing Hall at 10:15**.

The Middles Sunday School meets Sundays in **the library at 10:15**. The group is working through the study *Taming Your Thoughts with Max Lucado*.

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Join us **each Monday morning at 10:00** am for an Ecumenical Women's Bible Study. We meet in the **Conference Room** for a time of fellowship and study. Until the end of December we will be continuing our study on "The Messiah"; a study based on Handel's famous composition, "Messiah". Starting in January we will begin a DVD Study titled "Discovering God's Will". All women regardless of faith or denomination are welcome to join us. This is a "drop-in" group so people come when they are able. For more information you can contact Janet Becker at beckerjnj71@gmail.com.

NOMINATIONS

It's that time of year again when the Nominating Committee gets together to fill the positions on our church's committees! If you are asked by the group to be on a committee, please prayerfully consider it. The church works well when we combine all our gifts, talents and time together. Thank you for using what God has given you through your church!



GATEWAY GIVING TREE



The Gateway Giving Tree is now here loaded with “ornaments” with gift ideas for many of the residents at Gateway. If you would like to participate, take a numbered ornament from the tree (don’t throw it away), sign your name/phone number on the clipboard so that we know which numbers were taken, purchase the gift, wrap it, bring it back and place it under the tree (with the ornament attached). Gifts need to be back no later than December 11. The residents at Gateway very much appreciate your generosity.



FROM THE GREEN TEAM

Our Living World, Part 1: Animal Life by Ask the UMC

Please visit UMNews.org for the complete article. The following is a short summary of direct quotes.

When we consider what it means to be re-linked with our living world, we remember God’s first charge to humankind, recorded in **Genesis 1:28 NRSVUE**: “**Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth**”. In short be stewards of all animals of the living world.

Social Principles on animal life (www.umc.org/en/content/social-principles-in-the-natural-world#animal-life)

“We support regulations that protect and conserve the life and health of animals, including those ensuring the humane treatment of pets, domesticated animals, animals used in research, wildlife, and the painless slaughter of meat animals, fish, and fowl.



We recognize unmanaged and managed commercial, multinational, and corporate exploitation of wildlife, and the destruction of the ecosystems on which they depend threatens the balance of natural systems, compromises biodiversity, reduces resilience, and threatens ecosystem services.



We encourage commitment to effective implementation of national and international governmental and business regulations and and guidelines for the conservation of all species with particular support to safeguard those threatened with extinction.” We care about the diversity of life in all its forms, recognizing that each form of animal life has a place and makes an important contribution to the whole.



FINANCE REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2025

	Month	Year to Date	Percent of Budget	Percent of Year
Income	\$18,959	\$251,934	66	83
Expenses	\$28,271	\$287,965	69	83
Net income	(\$9,311)	(\$36,031)		

The Church has done a good job of keeping expenses in check as revenue has decreased in 2025 vs 2024. While we are running at a deficit, we are coming off of 3 positive years and still have cash reserves to cover expenses in excess of the current years income. The committee along with the Administrative Board are reviewing these numbers during this years budgeting process to keep the Church on a sound financial footing. Any questions can be brought to any member of the Finance Committee.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Arukah Institute has provided a overnight shelter space for our local unhoused population during the cold-weather months (starting in late December), but we need our community to provide the volunteers. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer as overnight warming center staff, please sign up for a training time. Flyers with training information are on the table outside the office. We are hoping to get 100 people to help carry the load. Let's join together to love and care for our neighbors.



Knitter's Group

Calling All Knitters and Crocheters! All skill levels are invited to come knit, crochet, loom or just chat on **Tuesdays at 2:30 pm** in the conference room.



Princeton Board Games Group

This group meets on Fridays at 6:00 pm in Cushing Hall. Everyone who's interested in learning more about modern board gaming and any player level is welcome to join this friendly group.



Red Cross Blood Drive

The Red Cross will sponsor their next blood drive on **Thursday, December 18 from 11:30 - 5:30 pm** in Cushing Hall. Consider signing up online: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>



NEW WEBSITE AND MOBILE APP

A new PFUMC website and mobile app are coming! United Methodist Communications has discontinued webhosting services to UMC churches. As a result our church has migrated to a new platform for our website. This new look will be going live soon!

This transition has allowed us the opportunity to offer an app for mobile devices. The app is an exciting edition to our church communications and makes it even more convenient to stay up to date on church events. You may notice the transition of the website in the coming weeks. Information on how to download our very own Princeton First United Methodist Church app will be shared in January. Look for more information and updates in the January Circuit Rider, weekly announcements and Facebook.



BELLS & CHOIR HOLIDAY SCHEDULE



Please note, there will be no bells or choir rehearsals on 12/24, 12/30, and 12/31. Thank you.

THANK YOU

Thank you to those of you who have donated baked goods, other treats, or money, this past year, to the coffee hour ministry. Thank you also to those of you who have come in early to help set up, when needed, or who have stayed to help with the clean-up. Each of these gestures are greatly appreciated. Without this help, we may not have been able to keep this ministry going.

With gratitude,
Connie and Pam

COMMITMENT CARDS 2026

Please prayerfully decide how you will be able to support the ministry of God through your church next year. Cards can be turned in until the end of the year. If you didn't receive your commitment card or lost yours, extras are available on the table by the little white church. Cards can be mailed, dropped off at the office, or placed in the little white church outside of the Sanctuary. Thank you in advance!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL PERSEVERANCE

On behalf of the PFUMC Finance Committee, we would like to say a big 'thank you' to all the people who have continued to contribute financially to the ministries of our church. Below are some of the ways in which you can give to the church.

1. Via mail – 316 S. Church Street, Princeton.
2. In the locked white mailbox by the main glass doors of the building.
3. Via your bank's on-line bill pay program. A physical check is then mailed to the church.
4. An automatic withdrawal (EFT/ACH) taken from your checking, savings or investment account. This can be done through your bank, or at our bank. **Contact Shelly Grabill for the bank information (i.e. routing number and acct. number).**
5. Through PayPal. Just visit our website (princetonfirstumc.org) and click on the 'giving' button. Then follow the instructions. You can set it up for a one-time use, or on-going. See Shelly if you have difficulties.

We continue to do ministry because of God's grace and your support.

REMEMBERING PFUMC IN YOUR WILL

We never like to think about the time when we won't be here, but it comes for all of us. Thankfully, we know the next phase of our life is a joyful one – being reunited with loved ones and with God. But we will all leave behind both the 'stuff' of this life and a legacy. What better way to combine both than by including your church in your will. Hopefully you have wonderful people to leave gifts to as well, but if you include PFUMC in your will, you'll be ensuring important ministry will continue long into the future because of your generosity. See a member of the Endowment Committee if you have questions.



PRAYER CORNER

Remember in your prayers...Family of Max Lauritzen, Family of Jerry Campbell, Susan Johnson (health issues), Joanne Swan (broken hip), John Sayers (cancer treatments), Bob Parker (health issues), Lynn Kautz (Paul Kautz's sister-in-law – lung cancer), storm victims in our nation, those with cancer, or illness in our congregation, those awaiting tests/results, those recovering from surgery & treatments, the lonely, the homeless, refugees, immigrants, military personnel, health care workers, law enforcement, fire and emergency personnel.

PRAYERS OF *Praise*

Third graders Hannah Noord and Morgan Dowacter received Bibles from the church in November. Pastor Mike presented the Bibles to Hannah and Morgan with their families present during Sunday Worship on November 23.



Altar Flowers

If you're interested in providing flowers for the altar, let the church office know. Flowers are a beautiful part of God's creation, and people love seeing them in the Chancel area. You can order them from a florist, or pick them from your garden. Share the beauty with others as we worship God!



Treats for Social Hour

Volunteers are needed! The church provides the coffee, lemonade and water, but we rely on your baking skills/donations for the treats. Please consider signing up on the sheet outside the office, if you can provide treats of your choice. Thank you!



Donation Cart

If you have items to donate to Tri-County Food Pantry, please feel free to bring them in and drop them in the shopping cart located in Cushing Hall. The need is great, and all gifts are appreciated.

DECEMBER

Celebrations

Birthdays

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 Deb Anderson | 17 Megan May | 28 Rosie Baumgartner |
| 4 Anne Nelson | 19 Jenn Schnaiter | Grace Reiger |
| 5 Karen Kloeping | 21 Margaret Palmer | 29 Sandee Halberg |
| 7 Carol Byrd | 22 Jeannette Bystry | 30 Jason Hildebrand |
| Marlene Klingenberg | David Mussche | 31 Greg Anderson |
| 8 Lonnie Caldwell | Mary Tumbleson | Matthew Lucas |
| 9 Fallon Bush | 23 Linda Faber | Melody Powell |
| Brian Moell | Carol Ratliff | |
| 12 Pat James | 24 Jim Davis | |
| Clark Simpson | Joanne Swan | |
| 14 Fred Kimberley, Jr. | 25 Don Wooden | |
| 15 Michael Denton | 26 Lauren Denault | |
| 16 Sue Ray | | |

Anniversaries

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 9 Brad and Jannifer Powelson | 18 Jason and Sara Hildebrand |
| 12 Kyle and Jessica Chase | 19 Bruce and Sue Shriver |
| 13 Jim and Cheryl Miller | 24 Tom and Karen Newby |
| | 27 Les and Becky Orwig |

December 2025 at First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1st Sunday of Advent 1	10:00 Women's Bible Study	2:30 Knitters Group	11:30 UWF Christmas Luncheon at Underground	7:00 Annual Conference	Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	5:30 Saturday Evening Worship <i>with Holy Communion</i>
7 2nd Sunday of Advent 9 am Worship <i>with Holy Communion</i> <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School 10:15 Youth Sunday School 10:15 Righteous Renegades 10:15 The Middles 6:00 Youth Group	10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal 	6:00 Handbells Practice 9:00 Book Discussion 1:30 Care Team 2:30 Knitters Group 6:00 Handbells Practice 7:00 Church Council	5:30 Advent Study 6:30 Choir practice	11	Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	13
14 3rd Sunday of Advent 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Handbells Play Children's Sunday School 10:15 Youth Sunday School 10:15 Righteous Renegades 10:15 The Middles	10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table 	2:30 Knitters Group 6:00 Handbells Practice	5:30 Advent Study 6:30 Choir practice	11:30-5:30 Red Cross Blood Drive	Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	5:30 Saturday Evening Worship
21 4th Sunday of Advent 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Choir Contata Children's Sunday School 10:15 Youth Sunday School 10:15 Righteous Renegades 10:15 The Middles 4:30 Children & Youth Christmas Party	10:00 Women's Bible Study	2:30 Knitters Group 6:00 Handbells Practice	Christmas Eve Worship 4:30 and 7:00	Merry Christmas 	Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	5:30 Saturday Evening Worship
28 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Handbells Play 10:15 Youth Sunday School 10:15 Righteous Renegades 10:15 The Middles	10:00 Women's Bible Study	6:00 Handbells Practice 2:30 Knitters Group	31	HAPPY NEW YEAR 	Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	December Change the World: VIP Youth Group



The First United Methodist Church of Princeton, Illinois

Worship Service

9:00 a.m.

Saturday Service (1st & 3rd Saturdays)

5:30 p.m.

Michael Ray Hickok

Pastor

Fallon Bush

Treasurer

Josh Bush

A/V Technology Director

Charles Gebeck

Organist

Pat James

Chancel Choir Accompanist

Shelly Grabill

Office Manager & Financial Secretary

Amanda Noord

Children's Sunday School Leader

Shelley Orwig

Youth Sunday School Leader

Karen Newby

Handbell Choir Director/Chancel Choir Director

Tom Newby

Lay Leader

Elizabeth Schlender

Communications Director

Chris Rucinski

Nursery

Church Office

(815) 872-2821

Church General E-mail

office@princetonfirstumc.org

Church Website

princetonfirstumc.org

**The First United Methodist Church of Princeton
316 South Church Street
Princeton, IL 61356**

**POSTMASTER:
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



December



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